

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 QUITO 09034 302252Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
-----302253Z 037820 /60

O R 302206Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2701
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

S E C R E T QUITO 9034

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, EC, CI, PE
SUBJECT: PERU-CHILE-ECUADOR

REF: A) STATE 310852 B) CARACAS 14834

1. SEVERAL SOURCES, MOST RECENTLY PRESIDENT PEREZ, HAVE LAID MUCH OF THE BLAME FOR CURRENT TENSIONS AT THE GOE'S DOOR. OUR ANALYSIS TENDS TO SUPPORT THAT CONCLUSION. (ON THE OTHER HAND, FROM REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM USDAO LIMA IT APPEARS THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME RECENT PERUVIAN TROOP DEPLOYMENTS IN THE BORDER AREA, SO THAT THE LOCAL TENSIONS WERE NOT MADE OF WHOLE CLOTH.) THE PROBLEM IS NOT SO MUCH IN THE WEAKNESS OF THE JUNTA AS A WHOLE, BUT RATHER A FUNCTION OF A POWER PLAY BETWEEN THE ARMY JUNTA MEMBER, GENERAL DURAN, AND GEN. SOLON ESPINOSA, WHO ATTEMPTED SOME 15 DAYS AGO TO OUST DURAN. DURAN APPARENTLY HAS BEEN USING THE THREAT OF HOSTILITIES WITH PERU TO KEEP OTHER ARMY LEADERS IN LINE, AND HE SUCCESSFULLY ORDERED ESPINOSA'S FORCED RETIREMENT ON DEC. 28. SINCE THEN THE LEVEL OF PREOCCUPATION ABOUT AN

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IMMINENT PERUVIAN INVASION WHICH HAD BEEN INTENSE AMONG BOTH ECUADOREAN MILITARY AND CIVILIANS HAS GREATLY SUBSIDED.

2. IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THAT TENSIONS EMANATING FROM QUITO ARE BASICALLY CAUSED BY DEFENSIVE CONCERNS. IT IS A UNANIMOUS VIEW HERE -- INCLUDING THE ECUADOREAN

MILITARY -- THAT THE ECUADOREAN ARMY IS NO MATCH FOR PERU'S FORCES. THE MAIN FEAR IS THAT THE ECUADOREAN ARMY WILL PROVE TOTALLY INEFFECTIVE, AS IT DID IN 1941. ECUADOREANS RECOGNIZE THEIR RELATIVE MILITARY WEAKNESSES AND BELIEVE ANY ADJUSTMENT OF WHAT THEY VIEW AS THE UNJUST IMPOSITION OF BOUNDARY BY THE RIO PROTOCOL WILL HAVE TO BE RECTIFIED THROUGH DIPLOMACY. THE GOE'S PRIMARY INTEREST OF REGAINING ACCESS TO THE AMAZON, HOPEFULLY THOUGH NEGOTIATION A LA BOLIVIAN ACCESS, WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO PRODUCE CONFLICT UNLESS PERU MISINTERPRETED ITS MEANING TOTALLY.

3. I HAVE HAD SEVERAL MEETINGS WITH JUNTA MEMBERS DURAN AND POVEDA DURING THE PAST WEEK ON THE GULF OIL SITUATION AND AT NO TIME DID I GET THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY BELIEVED HOSTILITIES WERE IMMINENT. WHILE THIS IS POSITIVE NEWS, IT SHOULD NOT OVERSHADOW THE FACT THAT MANY INFORMED ECUADOR-EANS, BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIANS, ARE CONVINCED THAT PERU WILL ATTACK ECUADOR (AND PROBABLY CHILE) DURING THE NEXT TWO TO THREE YEARS. THE ECUADOREANS BELIEVE THAT PERU INTENDS TO TAKEOVER THEIR OIL FIELDS, PARTICULARLY SINCE IT HAS FAILED TO FIND LARGE QUANTITIES OF OIL IN THE TERRITORIES TAKEN IN 1941. THUS, TENSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT IN ECUADOR ARE UNLIKELY TO DISAPPEAR COMPLETELY IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

BLOOMFIELD

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NNN

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